



Healthy Homes Initiative

What is the Healthy Homes Initiative?

Because some of the most serious health problems for children can begin at home, IDEM established the Healthy Homes Initiative to provide Hoosier families with useful information about indoor air quality, lead exposure, drinking water, household hazardous products, pesticides and mold.

Indoor air quality

Paint fumes, radon gas and cigarette smoke, among other things, all contribute to poor indoor air quality. For a healthy home:

- Refrain from smoking inside your home and always smoke away from children.
- Remember to change your furnace filter at the beginning of every season.
- Test your home for radon; you can buy low-cost kits at your local hardware store or call (800) 272-9723 for more information.
- Buy a carbon monoxide alarm if you have gas appliances, such as a furnace, stove or water heater.

Lead exposure

Lead poisoning can cause learning and behavioral problems in children. For a healthy home:

- Find out if your home was painted with lead-based paint. If your home was built before 1978, it probably contains lead paint.
- Wash all areas around doors and windows with detergent and water monthly.
- Avoid sanding lead-based paint. If you need to prep peeling areas, scrape them while using a mist of water to avoid creating more dust and remember to use a drop cloth to catch paint chips.
- Ask a pediatrician or local health department to test your children for lead by the age of 2.
- Protect your children from lead poisoning by washing their hands and face often with soap and water and wash toys at least once a week.
- Remember to let the cold water run for 30 seconds before you use it and never use hot water for drinking or cooking. You can contact your local health department to have your water tested for lead.

Household drinking water

Wherever your water comes from, it's important to keep it clean. For healthy drinking water:

- Avoid using excessive amounts of pesticides and herbicides when treating your yard.
- Clean up pet waste.
- Properly dispose of hazardous chemicals by calling your local solid waste management district; never throw chemicals in the garbage or down the drain. Information on your local solid waste district is available at www.IN.gov/idem/oppta/recycling/swmd/contact.pdf.
- Talk with your drinking water supplier about where your water comes from and what contaminants may be in it. Community water systems are required to annually send customers a Consumer Confidence Report that contains information about water quality.

Household hazardous products

Products can be called hazardous if they can cause harm when not used properly. For a healthy home:

- Keep track of hazardous chemicals that are sometimes stored outside, such as gasoline and paint, and make sure that the containers are closed tightly.
- Never mix two products together unless you are sure it is safe.
- Keep hazardous products in a locked cabinet out of reach of children and in original containers.
- Buy products in child-proof containers.
- Recycle and replace mercury-containing items, such as old household fever thermometers; replace mercury-containing thermostats with digital ones.
- Locate your community's hazardous waste collection points for proper disposal of these items.

Use of Pesticides and Integrated Pest Management

IPM uses non-chemical and chemical methods to rid homes of unwanted pests. To eliminate pesticide use in your home:

- Keep pests from entering the home by sealing up cracks and crevices.
- Make sure screens do not have holes; seal doors so that insects cannot get through.
- Clean up spills right away and do not leave garbage out because it attracts bugs.
- Store food in airtight containers.
- Reduce clutter and cardboard to avoid attracting cockroaches and other pests.
- Use baits, gels and traps instead of applying pesticide sprays when possible. Do not use rodent baits if you have children or pets.
- Hire contractors only if they use IPM strategies.

Mold

Some molds are toxic and can make allergies and asthma worse. For a healthy home:

- Rid your basement of standing water.
- Keep drip pans in refrigerators, dehumidifiers and air conditioners clean and dry.
- Fix leaks right away, especially in plumbing and roofs.
- Make sure rainwater drains away from your house.
- Use dehumidifiers and/or air conditioners to remove excess moisture during periods of warm, humid weather.
- Refrain from over watering houseplants and make sure the pan is under the pot to prevent spills.
- Use exhaust fans when cooking, showering or running the dishwasher.
- Check to make sure your clothes dryer vents to the outside.
- Clean hard surfaces with a bleach solution or soapy water. Absorbent materials such as drywall, ceiling tile and carpet may need to be replaced if left wet for 24 hours.

Where can I get more information about the Healthy Homes Initiative?

Call IDEM's Office of Planning and Assessment at (800) 988-7901 ext. 39479 or visit IDEM's Web page at:

www.IN.gov/idem/kids/healthyhomes.html.